

# FIJI



CAPITAL:  
SUVA



## LANGUAGES

FIJIAN, ENGLISH  
& FIJI HINDI

POPULATION OF  
939,000

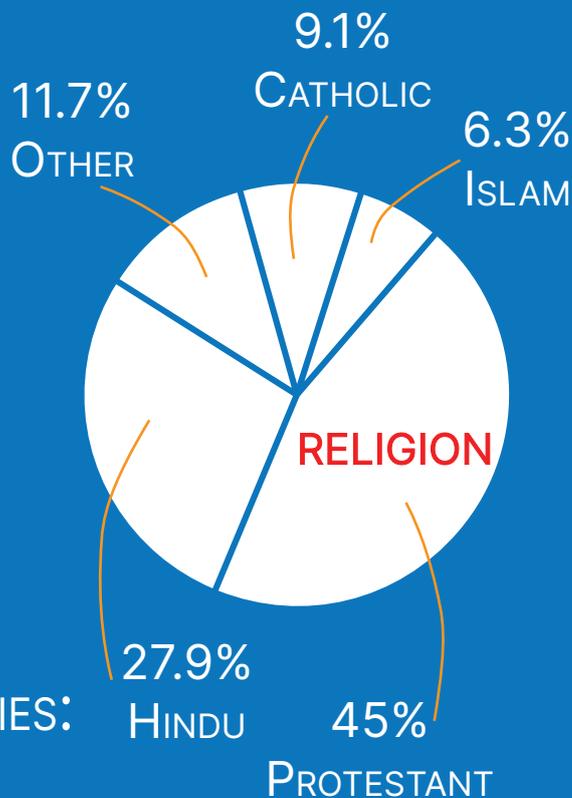


18,274 SQ KM  
IN LAND SIZE



FIJIAN DOLLAR

MAJOR INDUSTRIES:  
TOURISM  
AGRICULTURE  
MINING



42.37%  
OF POPULATION  
ARE UNDER  
24 YEARS OLD



FAVOURITE SPORTS:  
RUGBY UNION  
RUGBY LEAGUE  
NETBALL



Welding classes.



Sport time, students playing rugby in the playground.

## Geography

Fiji consists of 332 islands (106 of which are inhabited) and 522 smaller islets. The islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu account for about three-quarters of the total land area of the country. The country is mountainous, with peaks up to 1,324 metres, and is covered with thick tropical forests. The climate is tropical marine, with only slight seasonal temperature variation.

## History

Fiji was first settled in about 1,500 BCE, followed by a large influx of people with predominantly Melanesian genetics about the time of the beginning of the Common Era. Europeans visited Fiji from the 17th century and, after a brief period as an independent kingdom, the British established the Colony of Fiji in 1874. Fiji was a Crown colony until 1970, when it gained independence as the Dominion of Fiji. A republic was declared in 1987, following a series of coups d'état.

Other coups followed in the 1990s and early 2000s. After years of delays, a democratic election was held in 2014, marking the end of Fiji's "transitional" period.

## Culture

The Western influences of British colonialism have left a cultural imprint on the indigenous peoples and introduced new migrant populations into the society. Nevertheless, native traditions have remained strong amidst the social, political and technological changes.

Native Fijians are the majority people and their origins on the land are deeply respected. All Fijians are often outstandingly proud of their identity and have a welcoming hospitality and warmth, which makes it such a popular tourist destination.

Almost all Fijians are religious and actively observant. A well-developed sense of gratitude and servitude (to one's community and God) has become a familiar feature of the Fijian character. Most people also have a multi-faith understanding as Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists coexist peacefully. People generally respect the important role one's spirituality plays in their lives and are very tolerant.

## AMS Projects in Fiji – Marist Champagnat Institute

Young people with learning difficulties, physical disability or socio-economic disadvantage tend to drop out of school early. The same is true in Fiji, where there has been a recent rise in the number of students who fail to complete a basic level of education.

In 2000 the Marist Brothers in Fiji opened a multicultural and co-educational school for post primary students with learning difficulties and special needs, the only one of its kind to be registered with the Ministry of Education. With a current enrolment of 118, the Marist Champagnat Institute (MCI) offers programs to young people who have struggled to fit into mainstream schooling. An initial two-year course focusses on learning how to learn, literacy, numeracy and building self-confidence. At its completion, students are encouraged to return to mainstream schools or undertake a further two years of vocational training in computing, catering, tailoring, agriculture, engineering, woodwork or childcare.

The Fijian government pays a per capita grant per student, however this figure is far below MCI's operational costs and does not include funds for maintenance, capital works or the salaries of ancillary staff. The vocational students generate a small but steady income stream each year by selling the items they have produced, learning basic business management skills in the process.

## Further reading/resources:

SBS Cultural Atlas ([www.culturalatlas.sbs.com.au](http://www.culturalatlas.sbs.com.au))

World Atlas ([www.worldatlas.com](http://www.worldatlas.com))